

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1015

CONFIDENTIAL ISLAMABAD 3778

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION ISLAMABAD INFO LAHORE FROM KARACHI
APRIL 18 REPEATED YOU:

QUOTE CONFIDENTIAL KARACHI 1825

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC, PINT, PK
SUBJECT: SECURITY AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN SIND

1. PROCESSIONS WERE TAKEN OUT OVER THE WEEKEND IN KARACHI, HYDERABAD, MIRPUR KHAS, SUKKUR, NAWABSHAH. THERE WERE PRESS REPORTS, WHICH WE CANNOT CONFIRM, OF THE ARMY FIRING ON DEMONSTRATORS IN HYDERABAD AND IN THE LANDHI AREA OF KARACHI. TEARGAS AND LATHI CHARGES WERE EMPLOYED HERE AND THERE BUT A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE PROCESSIONS WERE PEACEFUL. MOST VIOLENCE WHICH OCCURRED WAS AIMED AT PPP OFFICES AND HOMES, SEVERAL OF WHICH WERE BURNED, CHIEFLY IN KARACHI AND HYDERABAD. A BOMB THROWN AT THE PREMISES OF RADIO PAKISTAN IN KARACHI APRIL 16 DID NO SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE; A NUMBER OF PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO BURN THE PREMISES WERE UNSUCCESSFUL ALSO.

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2. THE PRO-PPP STUDENTS PROCESSION OF APRIL 16 WENT OFF UNEVENTFULLY WITH ABOUT 1,000 PARTICIPANTS. A GROUP OF PRO-PNA STUDENTS, (THE ESTIMATED TOTAL VARYING WILDLY FROM 18 TO 1,000) BOARDED THE TRAIN IN KARACHI WITHOUT TICKETS AND RODE TO HYDERABAD. THE ARMY WAS CALLED TO CONTAIN THEIR AGITATION AT THE STATION IN HYDERABAD AND THE STUDENTS ULTIMATELY RETURNED TO

KARACHI, AGAIN WITHOUT TICKETS.

3. GENERAL NIAZI IS ON A SPEAKING TOUR OF SIND. HE HAS SPOKEN TWICE TO SUBSTANTIAL CROWDS IN KARACHI. HIS THEMES ARE THE PREDICTABLE ONES OF DEMANDING THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIGNATION, NEW ELECTIONS AND THE RETURN OF THE COUNTRY TO PROPER ISLAMIC STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR.

4. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE A FEW PPP PROCESSIONS IN THE PROVINCE, NOTABLY THAT OF THE STUDENTS IN KARACHI, THERE WERE NO KNOWN INTER-PARTY CLASHES EXCEPT SCATTERED ONES CAUSED BY PNA ATTACKS ON PPP PREMISES IN SEVERAL PLACES. A SOURCE WITH CONTACTS IN THE PARTY REPORTS THAT THE PPP PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP MET AGAIN APRIL 17 AND DECIDED AGAINST UNLEASHING PPP PROCESSIONS PENDING FURTHER GUIDANCE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER. (HOWEVER, A PRO-PPP PROCESSION OF "FISHERMEN AND PEASANTS" IS PLANNED FOR APRIL 20 IN THE MALC AREA. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT UP TO 50,000 PARTICIPANTS ARE EXPECTED.)

5. SPOKESMEN FOR SEVERAL COMPONENTS OF THE PNA HAVE SCORNFULLY BRUSHED ASIDE BHUTTO'S APRIL 17 PRESS CONFERENCE. TYPICALLY THEY SAY THAT IT CONSISTED OF NOTHING BUT MORE PROMISES FROM A MAN IN WHOSE PROMISES THE PEOPLE HAVE NO FAITH. THEY STUCK TO THE LINE THAT BHUTTO MUST RESIGN AND THAT NEW ELECTIONS MUST BE HELD.

6. THE USUAL SPATE OF PROCESSIONS BY VARIED GROUPS IS SCHEDULED FOR TODAY. WE HAVE AN EYE WITNESS REPORT
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THAT HYDERABAD IS CLOSED DOWN; THERE IS NO TRANSPORT ON THE STREETS AND PROWLING DEMONSTRATORS ARE BURNING PILES OF TIRES HERE AND THERE. MOST ACTIVITY IN KARACHI WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE AFTERNOON. MEANWHILE OUR LOCAL STAFF REPORTS CONGESTION AT THE PORT AS TRUCKERS REFUSE TO LIFT GOODS FOR UPCOUNTRY, CLAIMING SECURITY RISKS.

7. LABOR IS RAPIDLY COMING TO THE FORE AS THE LEADING EDGE OF THE PNA CAMPAIGN OF DEMONSTRATIONS. PRO-CESSIONS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE PAKISTAN LABOR ALLIANCE ARE SCHEDULED TODAY AND THE REST OF THE WEEK. STRIKES OF TRANSPORT WORKERS, PIA EMPLOYEES, BANK WORKERS AND OTHERS ARE RUMORED. THE MOST OMINOUS OF THESE, REPORTED BY SEVERAL SOURCES, IS A THREATENED 24-HOUR STOPPAGE OF ALL KESC ELECTRIC SERVICE IN THE CITY ON APRIL 20. THE GENERAL EXPECTATION IS THAT THE CENTER OF PNA VIOLENCE WILL MOVE BACK TO KARACHI ON OR ABOUT THAT DATE. MOORE UNQUOTE BYROADE

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